

No power to ban C.I.A. naming

By Our Staff Correspondent in Washington

THE American Government is powerless to prevent an organisation opposed to the Central Intelligence Agency going ahead with plans to publish the names of about 70 C.I.A. agents in Europe and Africa.

The group, called Fifth Estate, says it will include the names in the February issue of its magazine *Counterspy*.

The magazine first disclosed the identity of Mr. Richard Welch, head of the C.I.A. operations in Greece, who was shot dead outside his home in Athens on Dec. 23. President Ford has said that publication of Mr. Welch's name was partly responsible for his assassination.

The disenchanted former C.I.A. officials and former anti-Vietnam militants who run Fifth Estate say disclosure of Mr. Welch's identity had nothing to do with his death as he was working under "light cover" and was already well known to the C.I.A.'s enemies.

Congress move

Names to be published in the next issue of *Counterspy* include those of agents in France, Sweden and Angola, says Mr. Douglas Porter, co-editor of the magazine.

Mr. Larry McDonald, a Georgia Democrat in the House of Representatives, has urged

the Justice Department to investigate the Fifth Estate. His staff conceded yesterday that the Government has no power to keep the magazine quiet.

"We have checked and found there is nothing illegal about publishing the names of C.I.A. agents," said Mr. Kenneth MacKenzie, Mr. McDonald's legislative assistant.

Protecting sources

"If you leak information about Agriculture Department crop reports it is a criminal offence, but there is nothing in the law about naming people who work for the C.I.A. The C.I.A. director is charged with responsibility to protect the agency's methods and sources but is given no corresponding authority.

"In effect, the protection that has been afforded C.I.A. agents so far is honorary."

Mr. William Colby, the agency's Director, is envious of the British Official Secrets act and has urged Congress several times to pass similar legislation to protect the C.I.A. But congress has been more interested in exposing the agency's covert activities and Mr. Colby's pleas have been disregarded.

Mr. McDonald thinks the murder of Mr. Welch may have changed the mood in Congress, which is now in recess. He plans to offer legislation to include intelligence matters under existing laws prohibiting disclosure of defence secrets.